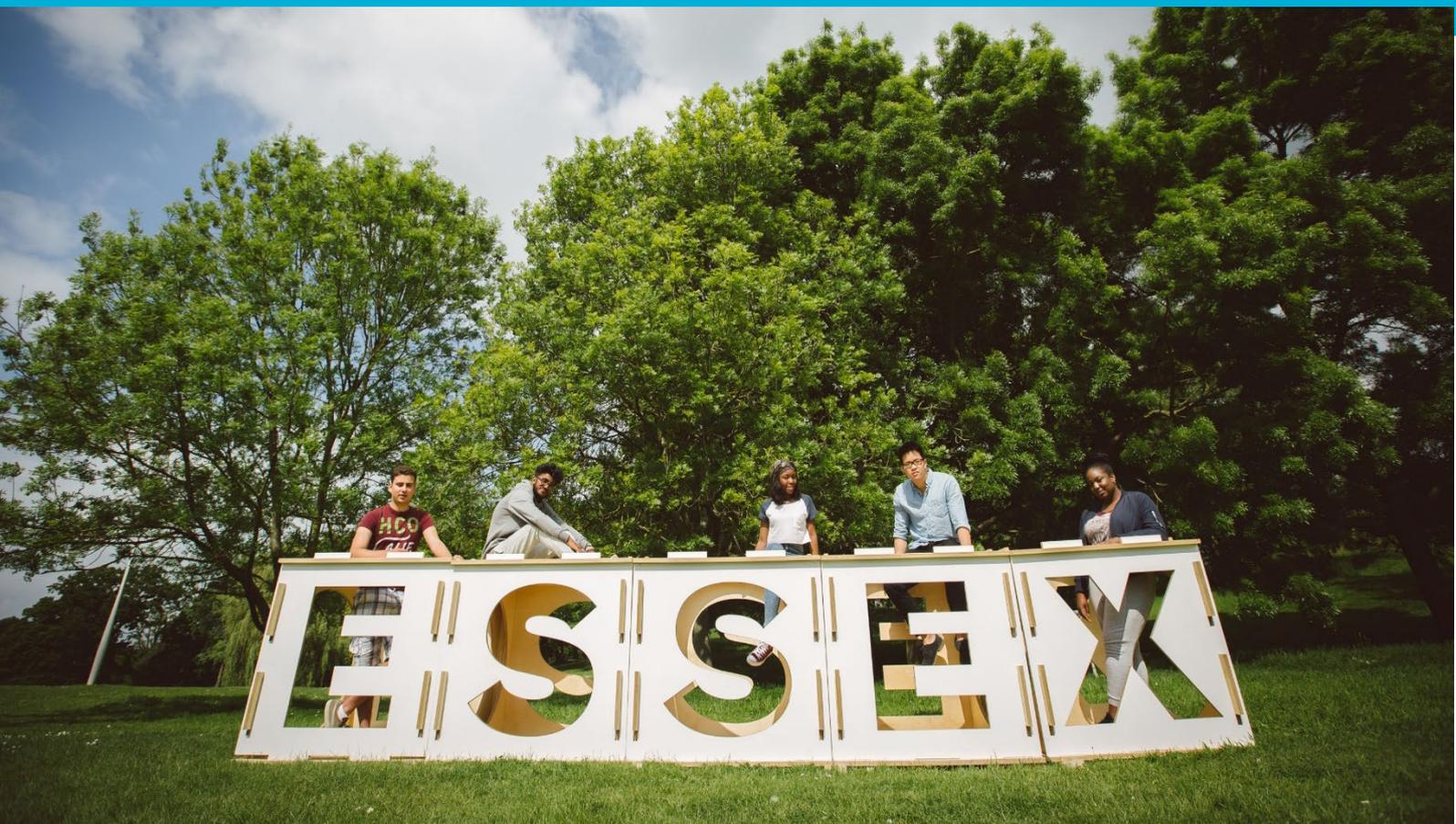




University of Essex

Your studies

School of Life Sciences Postgraduate Research Student Handbook 2024-25



Welcome

A welcome message from Professor Corinne Whitby, (Graduate Research Director) and Dr Greg Brooke, (Deputy Graduate Research Director)



A warm welcome to the School of Life Sciences. We hope that you will enjoy your time here and make the most of the exciting opportunities available. You are an important and integral part of the School community, contributing to its research activities, which fall into four groups: *Protein Structure and Mechanisms of Disease*, *Genomics and Computational Biology*, *Ecology and Environmental Microbiology* and *Plant Productivity*. Each research group brings together several academic staff and their associated teams, who collaborate on projects, scholarly activity and knowledge exchange.

In the UK, academic research outputs are assessed periodically by the government in a process called Research Assessment Framework (REF). In the last REF, 85% of our research was rated as being of internationally recognised quality. This means that the School has an excellent research environment, which encourages novel ideas, critical reasoning and communication skills. Our strong focus on research means that you will be supervised by some of the leading academics in your chosen fields. You will work closely with your supervisor, technical staff, postdoctoral scientists and other postgraduate students.

Our postgraduate programmes require commitment and hard work. However, the rewards for your endeavours are that you will carry out novel research, grow into highly skilled, independent research scientists, and along the way you will develop long-lasting friendships and collaborations.

We are committed to your career development, and we will offer advice and resources to help you. It is essential that you plan ahead and take the necessary steps to develop your career and gain the necessary skills that a competitive job market demands.

We look forward to seeing you in the School and wish you all the best with your studies!

Contents

Welcome	i
Introduction	7
Practicalities and getting started	8
Registration (new students)	8
Registration (returning students).....	8
Right to study	9
Students with sponsored immigration permission	9
Explore your campus	9
Get connected.....	9
Your IT account.....	9
Campus wifi.....	10
Essex apps.....	10
MyEssex.....	10
Find Your Way	10
Zoom	10
Working while studying	10
Your personal belongings	11
The Essex Experience	12
Embracing our Values.....	12
Equality, diversity and inclusion	12
Student communities.....	13
Environmental Sustainability for All.....	13
Essex Sport.....	14
Students' Union.....	14
Get involved!	14
Chart My Path	15
Essex spirit, social media and what's on?	15
About the School of Life Sciences	16
Meet the team	16
Your supervisor	16
Supervision of research students during periods of leave	17
The Supervisory Panel (SP) and Research Students' Progress Board (RSPB)	17
Postgraduate Research progress and milestones	18
Staff research interests	18
Departmental/school resources and facilities	18
School Common Room	19
Postgraduate (Research) Study Room / Lab	19
Postgraduate lockers (if applicable).....	19
Postgraduate Research training	19

Printing, photocopying and scanning	19
Noticeboards	20
Social media	20
Learning and Teaching	20
Student Staff Partnership	21
The academic year	23
My programme of study	24
Making changes to your study	24
Thinking of leaving or taking a break?	25
Periods of study	25
Library and Cultural Services	26
Library Services	26
Art Exchange	27
Lakeside Theatre	27
Peer Review with the Essex Student Journal	28
University and school training events	29
Doctoral Welcome Conference	29
School Seminars	29
School Mentoring Scheme	29
Scientific Societies and Conferences	30
Presenting your work	30
Cohort Building Event	31
The Graduate Forum	31
Research Groups	31
Study Abroad	32
Assessment and Academic Integrity	33
Ethics and integrity in research	33
Risk assessments in research	34
School Safety	34
Safety glasses	35
Academic integrity, academic offences and research misconduct	35
Referencing	35
Academic Skills Support	36
Departmental/school support	36
Laboratory Notebook	36
Ordering and Stores	37
Use of equipment	37
Repairs	38
Late working	38
Proofreading services	38

Language classes	39
Academic English Support	39
General English classes for beginner/intermediate/advanced learners (GEC)	39
Learning a language	39
Extenuating Circumstances	40
Submission of Thesis	41
Thesis Submission Pre-Examination	41
Thesis Submission for Award.....	41
Thesis Deposit and Retention.....	41
Examiners and the Viva	42
Exit Awards (Professional Doctorate students only).....	42
Appeals	42
Student Voice.....	43
Student Representatives.....	43
Student Voice Groups	43
Student Surveys.....	43
You Matter.....	44
Student Services Hub	44
Support for disabilities and additional needs	44
Support for students who are pregnant.....	45
Support for students who are parents or guardians.....	45
Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEP).....	45
Essex Access Forum	46
Seeing a Doctor	46
Counselling service	46
Digital wellbeing support	46
Student Wellbeing Support Line	46
Wellbeing appointments for students at Colchester, Southend and Loughton.....	47
Study and Wellbeing Intervention Policy and Procedure.....	47
UK immigration advice and guidance	47
Money management	48
Funding opportunities.....	48
Students' Union Advice	48
Residence Life	48
Religion, faith and beliefs.....	49
Harassment support.....	49
Health and safety on campus	49
Making a complaint	50
Your information.....	50
Changes to your information.....	50
Your personal information.....	50

Student Development.....	52
Careers Services.....	52
CareerHub.....	52
Get experience.....	52
Volunteering.....	52
You Are Essex.....	54
Your Award Certificate.....	54
Graduation ceremonies.....	54
References.....	54
Requesting references from members of staff.....	54
Copies of references.....	55
Alumni.....	55

Introduction

Your Student Handbook will tell you everything you need to know about your department or school, the University, its academic policies and procedures, and all of the resources that are available to you.

At Essex we put the success of our students at the heart of everything we do, and want to support you to achieve outstanding outcomes. We are absolutely determined to provide you with the best Essex education and student experience we can, while safeguarding your health and wellbeing.

We celebrate diversity and challenge inequality. We are a truly diverse community where differences are celebrated, and individuality is valued. Your contribution is welcomed and encouraged based on your own thoughts and experiences. As part of our community, you will have the freedom to explore, experiment, challenge your discipline and have your ideas shaped by peer and professional knowledge from all over the world. Essex is about more than just getting a degree: we have so much to offer our students!

Things might have to change and adapt over the year, so make sure that you're checking online and keeping in touch with your department or school for the latest updates. The [Student Directory](#) contains a wealth of other helpful sources of information which you may also find useful.

Practicalities and getting started

You've made it to Essex! We've outlined below the most important things you need to make sure you do as soon as possible to get your time at Essex started.

Registration (new students)

As a new student, you must complete the [registration process](#) in order to begin your studies with us. Registration is not only a formal procedure of enrolling you into the University, but also connects you to a number of vital systems which allow you to access your online Welcome and Induction information and start your studies. Because of this, you'll be asked to complete compulsory steps, such as activating your Essex IT account, provide key information about you as part of Online Registration (including payment of fees where required), attend an in-person Right to Study Check on campus and collect your Student Registration Card. Once you've completed these steps, you'll be able to begin attending teaching and engage with your course.

You should ensure you have completed the [registration process, including payment of your fees \(where required\) by the published Latest Registration Deadline](#) for your course. If you do not do this, you may not be allowed to register and begin your course with us.

Registration (returning students)

As a returning student, you will need to ensure you complete [Online Registration and pay your fees \(if required to do so\)](#) at the start of each academic year to be able to continue your studies with us. It is essential that you complete all required steps, by the published [Latest Registration Deadline](#), otherwise you may not be allowed to continue your studies with us.

If you are a student undertaking studies with us with a form of immigration permission, in some instances you may be required to undertake an additional Right to Study Check, before being permitted to re-register. This may be the case if one or more of your documents have expired, your immigration status has changed or you have changed programme and have been required to obtain a new visa. You will be contacted by our International Services Team if you need to complete an additional check.

Right to study

The University must ensure all students have the right to study at the University of Essex for the whole duration of their course. If you were born outside the UK or Republic of Ireland, your [immigration permission](#) to study in the UK will be checked via the online Right to Study system, when you first register on your course, and as necessary thereafter. Students have a duty to maintain valid UK immigration permission that allows study for the duration of their course, failure to do so may lead to withdrawal from the University under the [University's General Regulations](#).

Students with sponsored immigration permission

The University is a Student Sponsor with a track record of compliance and must ensure we remain compliant to retain our sponsor status. Students with a Student visa have [additional responsibilities](#) to the University and the Home Office. There will be conditions attached to your visa that restrict what you can do in the UK, breaking any of the conditions may mean you can't remain in the UK and complete your course.

You are expected to attend in-person meetings with your Supervisor every month and this will be monitored throughout your course. If your [attendance and engagement](#) fall below expected levels or you are absent without permission for a period of time this is likely to impact on the University's ability to continue to sponsor your Student immigration permission. The International Services Team can provide [immigration information and advice](#) throughout your studies.

Explore your campus

There is a broad range of [facilities](#) across each of our campuses to support your experience at Essex, whether in person or virtually. For the latest information, see the updates on [services on campus](#).

Get connected

Your IT account

You will need to set up [your Essex IT account](#). This will give you access to your Essex email, [Moodle](#), campus wifi, campus computers and many more digital resources. When you set up your Essex IT account, you will need to register an external email address and passphrase so that if you [forget your Essex password](#), you can also reset

it using these details. If you have forgotten those, you should contact the [IT Helpdesk](#). Make sure you keep your password safe and do not share it with others.

For a quick rundown of what you need when you first start, head to the [Getting Started with IT](#) guide on the Student Directory.

Campus wifi

If you are studying on any of our campuses, connect to our wifi by finding the eduroam network on your device. Use your Essex email and password to join.

Essex apps

The University has a variety of online systems and platforms designed to enhance your learning and help make processes, such as submitting coursework, easier. We have rounded up the top platforms, portals and apps that you need to know about!

MyEssex

[MyEssex](#) is your online account and can only be accessed via an internet browser. This is different to your applicant portal – you can use MyEssex to update your personal details, request replacement student cards or supporting documents, monitor your course progress, contact the Student Services Hub, and much more.

Find Your Way

When on campus, we know that finding your way can be challenging to start with. Our Colchester campus in particular can be difficult to navigate with a historically complex room numbering system! [FindYourWay](#) is our interactive campus map app designed to get you from A to B on either the Colchester or Southend campuses with quick and easy directions. You can download this app on your phone or tablet for free!

Zoom

Zoom is the principal delivery mechanism used by the University for online meetings, presenting, teaching and training. This quick [start guide](#) gives you an introduction to the essentials of joining and participating in a Zoom webinar or meeting.

Working while studying

Many students choose to work part-time to supplement their income. Working during your course can also give you excellent skills and experience to boost your CV.

Our [Student Services Hub](#) can help you find part-time work. There are also many opportunities to [work in paid jobs on campus](#).

You can access recommendations on working hours, as well as guidance on rates of pay and National Insurance contributions on the [Careers Services webpages](#).

If you have a Student visa, please read our information on [working in the UK for international students](#) before you start looking for a job. The country you are from and your visa type will determine whether or not you can work in the UK. If you can work, the type of work you are allowed to undertake and the number of hours you can work will be restricted.

Your personal belongings

The University does not cover costs for personal damage or loss of possessions; only in instances where the University has been negligent would a claim be viable for compensation for personal belongings. Therefore, you are strongly advised to take out personal insurance cover for your possessions. This is especially important for valuable items, such as laptops, phones and tablets.

The Essex Experience

We are proud of our inclusive and international community. Our campuses are places where every single person can feel they belong and where you can find the world in one place. We have created a [Student Charter](#) as a pledge that every student signs up to when they join us. By signing up, you promise to uphold our values and to behave in ways that strengthen and support our community. We promise to support you at every stage of your journey with us.

Embracing our Values

We are different at Essex. We are brave, we are bold, and we embrace challenges and drive change. Our values are underpinned by this very culture. While we encourage you to challenge the status quo and explore the unknown, we expect all of our students do so respectfully, intelligently and act as true ambassadors for the University. Our [Code of Student Conduct](#) outlines the rules and regulations that help us maintain our high standards of behaviour.

Equality, diversity and inclusion

The University recognises the value of diversity and is committed to providing equal opportunities for both students and staff. Our students and staff are treated with dignity and respect on the basis of their merits, abilities and potential, while still having the relevant impact and implications associated with race, ethnic or national origin, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, age, socio-economic background, family circumstances, religious or political beliefs and affiliations, or any other identity-forming characteristics, taken into consideration as necessary to ensure equal opportunity.

The University is committed to a programme of action to ensure that this [policy](#) is fully effective.

The School of Life Sciences has a large and vibrant community of scientists working at all levels in research, teaching, management and outreach. The University was awarded the Athena SWAN Institutional Bronze Award in November 2013 in recognition of its continuing work to support gender equality in Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) subjects and the School of Life Sciences achieved Athena SWAN Silver Departmental Award in April 2020. We believe equality, diversity

12 and inclusion are fundamental to our work, and the School has a webpage on Equality and Inclusion.

Student communities

We pride ourselves on being a welcoming and inclusive community. We recognise the value of diversity and are committed to equality of opportunity within the University.

We offer a wide range of support to individuals and [groups of student members](#) – our student communities – who may have specific requirements, interests or responsibilities to help fulfil your potential. Whether you are an international student, a mature student, a BAME student or have any other requirements or needs, we want to welcome you with open arms. The University is committed to a programme of action to ensure that this [policy](#) is fully effective.

Environmental Sustainability for All

The University of Essex is committed to reducing its environmental impact by reaching net zero carbon emissions by 2035. The Sustainability team works on a range of projects such as like carbon reduction, reuse and recycling, and sustainable education. During your time at Essex there are extracurricular opportunities for you to learn more about sustainable development and equip you with the skills and knowledge that will help you in your future choices – whether that's further study or the start of your career. Be sure to check your programme modules if you're keen to take environmentally focused course options. You can access extra-curricular activities through Chart My Path and the vTeam, plus you can join the Students for Sustainability Group. Research students also have options through [Proficio](#). When you are thinking about your research proposals, you can take bespoke workshops on considerations of sustainability designed to help you get best prepared for your thesis and career readiness. Your participation in all additional events is recorded on [Higher Education Achievement Record](#) (HEAR), your online CV. There are easy everyday habits to help you do your bit too – bring your own takeaway cup to cafes on campus for a discount and remember your bottle to refill at one of our many water coolers. There are lots of recycling bins across our campuses to encourage mindfulness when disposing of your waste. If you're living on campus, be sure to switch off lights and chargers when not in use, and keep windows closed in colder months when the heating is on. For any more information, head to the sustainability pages on the Essex

website. If you have questions or an idea for a sustainability event or project of your own contact the Sustainability team: sustainability@essex.ac.uk. Follow us on Instagram: @uoe_susandgrounds and [LinkedIn](#).

Essex Sport

Learning doesn't just happen in the classroom. Keeping active during your studies is a great way to meet new people, help relieve stress, maintain good physical and mental wellbeing, increase productivity, and improve your employability.

[Join](#) Essex Sport and be part of something bigger. We're a community of like-minded individuals who are dedicated to enriching your experience at University of Essex. By fuelling your passion for all things active we help you make new friends, find new interests and be the best you. Whatever your sport, whatever your level, from fan to [professional athlete](#), we've got a place for you.

Visit the [Essex Sport](#) website or [download the app](#) to discover all the ways you can keep active during your time at Essex. In order to ensure the welfare of our community there may be changes to opening hours or what's available, so do check on the website and our [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#) for the latest information.

Students' Union

We're famous for our [Students' Union at Essex](#), and for good reason. Here you're not just a member of a normal Students' Union; you're part of a family. They work hard to support our PGR community, and are here from day one to the moment you graduate to support you in any way we can.

The Students' Union is run by students for students, and you have the ability to shape what they do. From deciding who leads the SU by electing our entire Student Leadership team including the PGT officer, to shaping your own experiences at Essex, they are here to represent your views and work with you to make amazing things happen.

Get involved!

There are opportunities to join [Sports Clubs](#), and get involved with competitive sports in our [BUCS teams](#).

We have over [120 Societies](#) where you can meet people with similar interests, challenge yourself with something new or if you can't find what you are looking for- [Start your own.](#)

We also train, recruit and support hundreds of student reps each year. These reps gather feedback to share student viewpoints on academic experiences. You can find out more about student reps including how to sign up and getting trained [here](#).

We also have our very own lettings agency ([SUHomes](#)), to offer help and support to students to find off campus accommodation.

Chart My Path

Use Chart My Path to discover over 200 extracurricular activities offered at Essex, and get recommendations personalised to you. Log into [GradIntelligence](#) to get started.

Essex spirit, social media and what's on?

Keep up to date with important news, events and offers from across the University with our Essex spirit newsletter, delivered directly to your Essex email address.

Follow us on social media:



/uniofessex



/uniessex



/Uni_of_Essex



/uniofessex



/uniessex



/@uniessexonline

Our [Events calendar](#) brings together all the events happening across our three campuses, so you can make the most of your time at Essex.

About the School of Life Sciences

Meet the team

A full list of all academic and professional services staff for the School of Life Sciences can be found [on our website](#). Below is a summary of the roles of staff that you are likely to be in contact with most frequently. ¹

Graduate Research Director			
Prof Corinne Whitby	ext: 2062	cwhitby@essex.ac.uk	Room 3SW.5.13
Deputy Graduate Research Director			
Dr Greg Brooke	ext: 3332	gbrooke@essex.ac.uk	Room 3SW.5.07
Graduate Administrator (Research)			
Marcus Buchanan		ispgr@essex.ac.uk	Room 3SW.4.00
Departmental Disability Liaison Officer			
Dr Thomas Cameron	ext: 2552	tcameron@essex.ac.uk	Room 3SW.3.14

The Departmental Disability Liaison Officer (DDLO) is a direct link between you and the Student Services Hub and your department. They can help make sure that the disability service know about any adjustments you need.

Your supervisor

A supervisor will have been appointed for you during the admissions process. You are expected to have regular contact with your supervisor during your studies and they should be the first port of call for any concerns/problems. We recommend that you consider attending the '[Making the most of your supervisor](#)' training course, provided through Proficio. In addition, if needed, the PGR Director within your department/school is also available to support you during your studies.

¹ Department/school information in this Handbook is correct at time of publication but there may be role changes within the department/school throughout the Academic Year. Students should consult staffing details held online for the most up-to-date information.

If you have a disability, long term medical condition and/or Specific Learning Difference and have not registered with Student Wellbeing & Inclusivity Service, to discuss your support needs, please email include@essex.ac.uk.

Supervision of research students during periods of leave

Academic staff serving as supervisors of postgraduate research students will, on occasion, take periods of research leave for research purposes. During some periods of research leave, supervisors may not be in residence at the University. It is incumbent upon the supervisor, with the approval of the PGR Director, to develop a plan for the continuing supervision of students during periods of research leave. In making such arrangements, it is the policy of the department/school that:

- a) Members of staff are expected to continue to carry out their role as supervisor during periods of research leave.
- b) Members of staff on research leave are not expected to attend Supervisory Panels but are expected to provide a written assessment of progress.
- c) Members of staff on research leave should make arrangements for continuing contact with their supervisees, whether through face-to-face meetings, or through some form of remote communication,
- d) In cases where a member of staff plans to be out-of-residence for an extended period during their research leave, an alternate member of staff should be named (by the PGR Director in consultation with the supervisor) as a local contact for the supervisee student. The local contact is not meant to act as a substitute supervisor (see point (A) above) but to serve as a designated point of contact in the Department during the period when the supervisor is out-of-residence.

The Supervisory Panel (SP) and Research Students' Progress Board (RSPB)

These are the formal committee meetings at which an individual student's work, training/skills development, and progress are reviewed against the published milestones. Progress decisions are considered by the SP with a recommendation being made to the RSPB. This includes Confirmation of Status and entry to the next stage of study or period of completion, along with extensions, downgrading and

discontinuation. The final RSPB decisions and/or recommendations are reported to the relevant Faculty Dean (Postgraduate).

Your Supervisory Panel is composed of you, at least one of your supervisors and one other academic who acts as Chair. In exceptional circumstances where the sole supervisor is on study leave, an acting supervisor may attend.

The RSPB comprises senior members of academic staff and is chaired by the PGR Director or Head of Department/School. It reviews the progress of every student through to the award of a degree, withdrawal or failure, on the basis of the reports from the Supervisory Panel, including the written report from the student.

Postgraduate Research progress and milestones

It is important that you familiarise yourself with the departmental [milestones](#) for your degree and the requirements for your chosen thesis format. The milestones are designed to help you submit your thesis by the deadline and are used to assess your progress during your period of study. The milestones will be considered at your Supervisory Panels and RSPB which take place throughout your degree.

You should review your [milestones](#) regularly to ensure you'll be ready to submit your thesis by the required date. The research thesis is assessed in accordance with the normal arrangements for research degrees, as outlined in the [Principal Regulations for Research Degrees](#)

Staff research interests

Our work covers multiple areas of research within biological sciences. Discover more about our staff and their work on our [online staff pages](#).

Departmental/school resources and facilities

A wide range of facilities and resources are available for all students to access and use as part of their study at Essex. Each department and school also have a selection for the exclusive use of their students. Below is a summary of the facilities and resources that are likely to be most useful to you.

School Common Room

The Darwin School Common Room (3SW.4.11) is located on the 4th floor and is for the use of all students and staff.

Postgraduate (Research) Study Room / Lab

All postgraduate research students can use the hot desk facilities in the Postgraduate Research Room, 3SW.4.01. For desk space, please see Marcus Buchanan.

Postgraduate lockers (if applicable)

Lockers are available in the Postgraduate Research Room, 3SW.4.01. Please speak to Marcus Buchanan if you are interested in using a locker.

Postgraduate Research training

PGR students all have access to Proficio; our innovative professional development scheme, unique to Essex. We believe that your academic and professional development is vital to your growth as a postgraduate research student and we give you funds that can be spent on a variety of courses and conferences.

As a postgraduate research student, you will be registered on the Proficio system. You will need to complete the Training Needs Analysis (TNA) in order to unlock your Proficio funding account. The enrolment key is 'PGRstudent'. Information on Proficio is included in your welcome pack but can also be found on the PGR Moodle page.

In addition to laboratory/field work and laboratory training directly related to your research topic, research students are also required to attend a more formal, structured training programme, details of which will be circulated via email.

All students will need to attend mandatory health and safety training, which runs at the beginning of each intake, before undertaking any lab work. Students that do not attend the training are unable to commence work in labs. Details of this training will be circulated via email.

Printing, photocopying and scanning

All students can [print, copy and scan for free at Essex](#), subject to our fair use policy. You can print from a campus PC or from your personal device using our mobile print service. Campus printers can be found in or near to study spaces where there are

computers. Find out how to print and how to top up your printer credit on the [Student Directory](#).

Please note that there are strict laws about copyright infringement; more information can be found on the [Library website](#) which explains what and how much you are permitted to copy. Usage is monitored and subject to a fair use policy.

Noticeboards

Every department and school has their own noticeboard(s) providing information on staff, courses and classes, updates, careers, events and opportunities. The Postgraduate Research noticeboard is located along the 4th floor corridor.

Social media

The School of Life Sciences has its own [Facebook page](#). Through this page you can see our latest news, upcoming events and open day information.

We also have a specific [Facebook group for PGR students](#) where you can share tips, ideas and relevant research links.

We have created a [SLACK group](#) which enables you to start discussion “threads” around particular topics, such as accommodation and general university queries. SLACK also allows you to communicate amongst each other and arrange Zoom meetings. The SLACK group includes key academic members of staff as well as the Graduate Director and Postgraduate Research Administrator.

The PGR Moodle page has a forum where students can post questions about problems they may encounter in their work. This forum allows students to seek and share answers to common queries.

Learning and Teaching

The University is committed to providing equal opportunities for all our students regardless of where or how you study. Our diverse student population is taken into account when developing the resources, services and facilities on and off campus, when we create our courses, write publications and course materials, and set our policies and regulations.

Student Staff Partnership

The supervisor-student relationship is an interactive one where communication will take place between both with the supervisor offering advice to the student throughout the PhD. The relationship will change over the period of study, from the supervisor being more prominent in the first year with the student gradually becoming more independent. Communication will take place either face-to-face or via electronic means, to engage in discussion/review of the work and progress. These meetings will be at least once a month (and bi-monthly for part-time students).

If any difficulties arise during the course of your work or supervisory arrangements it is preferable that they are raised initially with your Supervisor. If this is not possible, speak with Marcus Buchanan who will arrange an appointment for you with the Graduate Director (Research). Problems of a more general nature, applying to several postgraduate students, may be raised at the Postgraduate Research Student Voice Group

As a Postgraduate Research student, you have a responsibility to:

- Read the documentation provided, including the [regulations](#) for your degree, the [Code of Practice](#) and details of the departmental supervisory arrangements.
- Attend meetings with your supervisors and Supervisory Panels as arranged, and prepare adequately for them, notifying your supervisor in the event of unavoidable absence.
- Keep in regular contact with your supervisor. Students and supervisors are required to communicate, whether face-to-face or by electronic means, to engage in discussion/review of the student's work and progress at least once a month (and bi-monthly for part-time students).
- Provide updates on progress as outlined in the [Progress and Appeals Procedures for Research Degree Students](#)
- Carry out, as far as possible, the work agreed with your supervisor and submit written work as agreed so that you meet the required milestones.
- Familiarise yourself with the departmental [milestones](#) for your degree and the requirements for your chosen thesis format. The milestones are designed to help you submit your thesis by the deadline and are used to assess your progress during your period of study. The milestones will be considered at your RSPB

which takes place twice a year (or equivalent for part-time students). It's important that you review your milestones regularly to ensure you'll be ready to submit your thesis by the required date.

- Familiarise yourself with University and subject-specific guidelines on ethical research, including data protection matters, and with health and safety and intellectual property regulations and obtain ethical approval as appropriate.
- Familiarise yourself with the expectations and conventions regarding academic referencing other people's work.
- Attend any research training and generic skills courses as agreed with your supervisor.
- As requested, submit reports on progress to professional practice and research supervisors, Supervisory Panels, or the departmental Research Students' Progress Board.
- Keep a record of your personal progress, including a copy of agreed training needs, courses that need to be attended and when they are attended. This may take the form of a logbook or research portfolio to be signed off by your supervisor.
- Inform the relevant supervisor promptly if there are any specific needs or circumstances likely to affect your work. Notify the Supervisory Panel/Research Students' Progress Board in writing of any extenuating circumstances that you believe have significantly affected your performance.
- Discuss any supervisory problems with your supervisor or the Head of Department or PGR Director. Alternatively, if you feel unable to talk to a member of the departmental staff, please contact the [Postgraduate Research Education Team](#) to discuss the concerns. Any discussions will remain confidential if requested. Students may request a change of supervisor but should note that it may not always be possible for suitable alternative arrangements to be made.
- You must present your thesis for examination by the end of the final term of your standard period, or by the end of the prescribed completion period.
 - A request for an extension of up to two weeks to the submission deadline may be made. Requests must be made to the Postgraduate Research Education Team in advance of the deadline. If granted an extension, you will not be expected to register or pay the prescribed fee for that two-week period.
- If you fail to present your thesis for examination by the deadline, you will be

deemed to have withdrawn permanently from the University and from your research degree, unless you are permitted an exceptional further period of completion.

- Extenuating circumstances that affect your ability to submit your thesis by the agreed deadline will be considered by the Dean on a case-by-case basis.
- Familiarise yourself with the guidelines on thesis submission and with the examination process, and ensure that you are prepared for your viva.

In addition to the above requirements, Professional Doctorate students should:

- Attend lectures and seminars for taught modules where applicable and attend meetings with your professional practice supervisor. For more information on this, please refer to the section on [taught modules](#) in this handbook.
- Complete the work required for your taught modules.
- Maintain a professional practice portfolio which forms part of the assessment for the degree.

The academic year

Postgraduate Research students are expected to work on their theses throughout the calendar year, and are not subject to the same academic year term structures as that of taught students. As a reference point, the academic year uses a week numbering system that covers the 52 weeks of a calendar year but corresponds to typical term dates. So, the start of the academic year is week 1, which is Welcome week, with teaching commencing in week 2.

Term	Week numbers
Autumn	2-11
Spring	16-25
Summer	30-39

You can view the University's week numbers with the equivalent dates in the week by week [calendar](#). The University's [key dates](#) include an overview of the start and end of each term and exam periods.

Some programmes have slightly different term dates. In the In the School of Life Sciences this does not apply. However, you will find that all campus activities and events make reference to the standard academic year terms and schedule noted above.

You are expected to be available during term time to attend teaching events where applicable, and unless otherwise advised by your department or school.

My programme of study

Each programme of study at the University has its own syllabus, full details of which, including the aims and learning outcomes, can be found in the University's [Programme Specifications Catalogue](#).

Your own programme structure, including your specific programme specification, can be found in the MyStudy section of your [MyEssex](#) homepage.

Making changes to your study

If you feel as though your research has changed direction and that it would be appropriate to change your degree title, please discuss this with your supervisor, as they'll be best placed to advise on the most suitable option. You may also feel it appropriate to change to a differing degree type (from PhD to MSD for example), again please discuss this with your supervisor in the first instance.

Once you have decided that you want to change your degree title, you will need to make a formal request using the online [Change of Course/Degree title form](#).

Until the final term of your standard period, you may request **a transfer from one mode of study** to another, for example from full-time to part-time, including distance learning, or vice-versa. You should discuss any proposed change with your supervisor.

Once you have decided you want to change your mode of study, you will need to make a formal request, using the online [Change of Mode of Study form](#), which will need to be approved by your department or school, and the Dean.

If your request is approved your period of study will be adjusted pro-rata.

If you are a financially **sponsored student**, you should discuss any proposed change with your funding body and/or check its terms and conditions. If you are a UK Research

and Innovation funded student, you should contact the Postgraduate Research Education team to discuss your request to change your mode of study.

If you are studying a course where an ATAS certificate is required and there are changes to your course, research area, supervisor or course length, you may need a new ATAS certificate. You can find further information on our Immigration [webpages](#).

Students with a Student visa may not be able to change their course without first obtaining a new visa from overseas, if eligible. You can find information on the potential visa implications of your decision on our [Immigration webpages](#). If you have any further questions you should contact the [International Services Team](#)

Thinking of leaving or taking a break?

You may experience doubts at some point during your studies. If you're thinking about leaving Essex, we're here to support you and give you the advice you need to help you make an informed choice. You can contact your department/school, supervisor or Student Services Hub to speak in confidence about your concerns, and also the [different options available to you](#) and the impact they may have.

You can find information on the visa implications of your decision on our [Immigration webpages](#). If you have any further questions you should contact the [International Services Team](#)

You should also be aware of how your funding may be impacted if you choose to take a break. You can do this by contacting the Funding Team – funding@essex.ac.uk.

Periods of study

Research degree	Mode	Standard Period	Completion Period
Masters by Dissertation (<i>MSD</i>)	FT	One year	Up to one year
	PT	Two years	Up to one year
Doctor of Philosophy (<i>PhD</i>)	FT	Three years	Up to one year
	PT	Six years	Up to one year
Doctor of Philosophy Integrated (<i>PhD</i>)	FT	Four years	Up to one year
	PT	Eight years	Up to one year

Library and Cultural Services

Library Services

The Library aims to provide all of the resources you will need to succeed in your course, via online reading lists and access to extensive collections of books, journals and a variety of other resources, both online and on our shelves.

As well as a team of specialist Librarians who can advise on appropriate resources for your area, there is also a Research Support team, who can advise on a variety of topics including open access, online research profiles, and how/where to publish and promote your work. Online support in these areas can be found in the Library's [Research Support guide](#). A range of workshops and training sessions are also held throughout the year through [Newcomers](#), a collaborative network that aims to support postgraduate research students and early career researchers by offering training and guidance covering topics across the research lifecycle. Signing up to the [Newcomers mailing list](#) is the best way to keep up to date with the latest training and development opportunities, and it also provides a platform to network with fellow early career researchers.

The Library is also home to a number of Special Collections which support the delivery of object-based learning across a variety of courses, and provide primary source material for research across many subject areas. We are home to two major art collections; [ESCALA](#) (the Essex Collection of Art from Latin America) and the [University Art Collection](#). Our Colchester Campus library houses [Special Collections](#), over 70 individual archives containing primary source materials and collections covering a variety of subjects and time periods. The collections provide a valuable resource for teaching, through object based learning and other sessions, and for research.

If you have any questions about Library services, there are a range of ways you can [get in touch](#) with the team.

At our Colchester Campus, the **Albert Sloman Library** on Square 5 has a variety of study spaces, including individual and group work areas and bookable study pods and rooms. There is also a dedicated Postgraduate Study Room that is open 24/7. You'll

need your student card to access this space, so be sure to bring it with you during your visit. The Library offers a wide range of learning resources, online and in print, with a dedicated Helpdesk, live chat and the opportunity to book appointments with experienced Library staff to help you through your studies and into whatever you choose to do after graduation. The Albert Sloman Library is open 24/7 during term time and offers a laptop loans service which is also available 24 hours a day.

See the [Library website](#) for the latest information on all our libraries and the services available, including opening hours.

Art Exchange

Placing students at its core, [Art Exchange](#) is a place where art, artists and the campus community come together. Our programme of exhibitions and activities are here to get you inspired, make new friends – or simply to chill while having fun making art.

We show international art by established and emerging artists throughout the year, building up a dynamic programme by working closely with the campus community, as the art on our walls is co-created by students and responds to what matters to them.

Alongside exhibitions, our exciting programme of events and art classes are free for students. Led by professional artists, they support students' creativity, confidence and wellbeing - as well as being great fun!

We want everyone to get involved and enjoy great art.

Lakeside Theatre

The [Lakeside Theatre](#) provides a warm, welcoming social hub of creativity at the heart of the University to foster the living learning community.

We produce a programme of diverse, dynamic and accessible live performances of theatre, music, comedy, dance, workshops, artist development and live art for audiences on and off campus. It is a learning and social experience for students that will deliver key life skills to enable them to respond to a rapidly changing world with creativity and personal and cultural confidence. Students' wellbeing remains at the forefront of what we do which is why we provide opportunities for enjoyment, inspiration and creativity.

We believe that theatre is for everyone, you don't have to be studying drama or theatre studies to take part in or develop as an actor, producer, director, technician, or performer. That's why we have our [Homegrown Programme](#), to develop theatre makers at the University of Essex. Students, researchers, staff and alumni of the university can join the programme at any stage in their journey for support, guidance and opportunity to become a performing arts professional. Keep an eye out for our workshops and for when applications open up to our [Homegrown Studio Season](#), where you can perform on our stage!

The theatre and technical facilities are kept up to date, for student use in education and further skill building in modern practices nationally and internationally.

Peer Review with the Essex Student Journal

Peer reviewing is a vital academic skill that can help you improve the quality of your own writing by providing feedback to others on theirs. [The Essex Student Journal](#) provides the opportunity for you to gain practical peer reviewing experience, with training, guidance, and support throughout.

This invaluable experience will enhance your expertise as an early career researcher, developing your understanding of the academic publishing process and providing an opportunity for you to contribute to the community. Peer reviewing is typically expected of researchers at all stages of their academic careers, so starting in our supportive environment will build your confidence for the future. The analytical skills you develop are transferrable to a wide variety of other professions too.

Not all universities have a Student Journal, making this a unique opportunity for you and the authors. Our multi-disciplinary journal, run by students, for students, showcases the hard work of our undergraduates and PGTs and, through a double-blind peer review process, supports them to develop their writing skills and produce high quality outputs.

If you are interested in developing your skills and helping others to do the same, find out more about joining our vibrant community of peer reviewers at the Essex Student Journal and embark on your academic peer reviewing journey with confidence.

If you have any questions, get in touch with the Journal Team via journal@essex.ac.uk.

University and school training events

Doctoral Welcome Conference

This is designed to introduce participants to researching at Essex and to mark the start of their doctoral journey with us. The School Postgraduate Training Programme This programme starts in Week 1 and continues throughout the year. Most of these training seminars and meetings are compulsory and progress is conditional on adequate attendance. They cover topics of common importance to all Life Sciences research students and have been designated by the Research Councils as topic areas in which graduate students must receive training. There is a training programme for each year of study and include sessions on writing a Literature Review, Annual Report writing, preparation of a thesis (includes School guidelines on the preparation of a thesis), and preparing for the viva. Information on training sessions throughout the year will be emailed directly to you.

School Seminars

Research students are expected to attend the regular School Seminars held during term time. These usually take place on Thursdays from 1.00 – 2.00pm. It is important to continue to extend your general scientific education. The seminars are selected to be of wide biological interest.

School Mentoring Scheme

The School of Life Sciences is committed to supporting staff and research students at all stages of their careers. A School Mentoring Scheme has been established as a result of an action from the School's Student Voice Committee meeting and Athena SWAN Silver Department Award. This voluntary scheme is open to all academic and research staff and PhD students.

Aims of Scheme

The Mentoring Scheme aims to support individuals at various stages of their professional or personal development. Mentors will provide support, give advice and guidance on career/ personal development and provide opportunities to reflect on

progress. The scheme supports both traditional mentoring with senior staff as well as 29 peer mentoring and can be either long-term or short-term to suit individual needs. Through the establishment of the Mentoring Scheme we aim to:

- Support staff and students at key career transition points
- Provide guidance on career and personal development

Further information can be found on the School Mentoring Scheme Moodle page. To request a mentor or to sign up as a mentor for this scheme, please contact Marcus Buchanan lspgr@essex.ac.uk

Scientific Societies and Conferences

It is really useful to join a scientific society and become part of the wider scientific community. In addition, societies hold conferences where you can meet key researchers and hear about new work, often before it is published. You may also have the opportunity to present your own work in a talk or poster. Some societies provide funds to students to attend these conferences. Your supervisor will be able to advise on which society or societies is appropriate for you to join and further information is available on the Early Career Researcher Resources Moodle. These conferences and other meetings in the UK or abroad are considered very important parts of your scientific training. If your studies are funded by a studentship or scholarship, your sponsors will probably have allocated funds for you to participate in at least one major conference. Your supervisor will keep you informed about these conferences or meetings and may be able to provide some financial support. The School may be able to help as well and a call for requests for funds to attend a meeting or conference is made each term by Email.

Presenting your work

Throughout your period of study you will be expected to present your work orally to audiences, typically in the informal setting of your laboratory group meetings or in your Research Group meetings. The annual Graduate Forum (below) provides a more formal meeting structure for poster and oral presentations. Some PhD students in their third year may, in addition, be invited to present a seminar to a wider School audience, for example during the weekly School Seminar Programme. Presentation of your

results in a poster or talk and the opportunity for discussion is an important part of participating in a conference or meeting.

Cohort Building Event

In 2017 the School held the first postgraduate cohort building event. The event brought together postgraduate students and postdoctoral scientists from all the diverse disciplines within the School to promote interdisciplinary knowledge and exchange of techniques. The event comprised of talks from each of the seven research groups, an interactive session on networking, an alumni presentation, a motivational lecture by an eminent guest speaker and the opportunity to attend a careers workshop to provide targeted careers advice. We plan to hold a similar event in due course.

The Graduate Forum

This is a compulsory one-day event held in September each year and must be attended by all research postgraduate students. First year students are required to present a poster, second years to give a 10-minute oral presentation and third years to co-ordinate the event. Third-year students are responsible for the planning and the organisation of the Graduate Forum, including the programme for oral and poster presentations, preparation of abstract booklet, organising publicity and refreshments. There are prizes for best oral and poster presentations. There will be seminars on poster preparation and also oral presentation for second and third years respectively, in the Summer Term (see your Training Programme timetable).

Research Groups

Students will be members of one of the research groupings: Protein Structure and Mechanisms of Disease, Genomics and Computational Biology, Ecology and Environmental Microbiology and Plant Productivity. These groups have regular research meetings which students should attend. Laboratory groups, research workers and students supervised by individual members of staff, also have regular lab meetings.

Study Abroad

As a postgraduate student there are a variety of opportunities through Essex Abroad to have an international experience. Providing you with the chance to enhance employability, gain valuable transferable skills and develop as individuals.

[Essex Abroad](#) have a wide range of [summer programmes](#) suitable for postgraduate students including summer schools abroad, volunteering programmes, international internships and research abroad opportunities which are open to all Essex students. These programmes vary in duration, location and cost. [Find out more](#) about Essex Abroad opportunities. For information regarding your funding during a study abroad, you should liaise with the Funding Team – funding@essex.ac.uk. Students with disabilities should also liaise with the Student Wellbeing and Inclusivity Service – include@essex.ac.uk.

The University of Essex is a founding member of the YUFE Alliance. YUFE (Young Universities for the Future of Europe) is a collaboration of 10 different European institutions, providing you with the opportunity to study across multiple partners virtually or physically; as part of your degree or in addition to it. YUFE aims to be a leading model of a young, student-centred, non-elitist, open and inclusive European University.

As a University of Essex student, you can obtain an international experience through YUFE, taking anything from academic to language courses, or even entrepreneurship courses; allowing you to go the extra mile and stand out from the crowd. Find out more about YUFE and how to apply on our dedicated section on the [Essex Abroad YUFE webpage](#) and through the [YUFE Virtual Campus](#).

Assessment and Academic Integrity

Undertaking a research degree varies for each person. Some are predominantly lab based, others require significant library research, and some must undertake taught modules. All schools and departments at the University employ a variety of assessment methods, and these will be tailored based on your research area and the course you're on.

Ethics and integrity in research

All research involving human participants and animal subjects, whether undertaken by the University's staff or students, **must** undergo an ethics [review](#) by an appropriate body and ethical approval **must** be obtained before it commences. You should first read the [Guidelines for Ethical Approval of Research Involving Human Subjects](#) or [Guidelines for Ethical Approval of Research Involving Animals](#) and then submit an Ethical Approval application form via [ERAMS](#). You should be aware that ethical approval cannot be granted retrospectively so it is very important that you make your application before you start to recruit participants or collect data from them.

Further information about the research ethics process can be found on the [University's ethics review webpages](#).

All research projects undertaken under the auspices of the University should observe a commitment to good research conduct. Information on research integrity can be found on the University's [research integrity webpages](#).

The University offers the following training resources to ensure you are familiar with best practice in research: Epigeum [module on research ethics](#) and Epigeum [modules on research integrity](#).

Studies involving the NHS (i.e. patients, their data or samples; staff, their data or samples; sites; data extracted from or through clinical systems) and studies involving human tissue or adults lacking capacity to consent are very likely to need some kind of NHS approval, such as ethical approval, governance approval or study registration. Even 'data only' studies, which do not involve direct contact with NHS staff or patients, will often require approval of some kind. Service evaluations, audits and similar involving the NHS may not require NHS ethical review. In cases where the project has not been defined as research

by the HRA, ethical approval will need to be sought through the University's ethics review processes. If your study involves the NHS, you should contact the REO Research Governance Team (reo-governance@essex.ac.uk) at an early stage for advice about the ethics review process.

Research involving vulnerable groups may require a DBS check if you are engaging in regulated activity. More information about the DBS check process can be found on the [University's DBS webpages](#). The University offers a general introduction to safeguarding Moodle module which you are encouraged to complete at the same time as your DBS check. This training is additional to the mandatory safeguarding training that may be offered by your department/school and/or the placement provider.

Risk assessments in research

If the research you are undertaking could potentially harm participants, researchers or the University (e.g. risks to physical or mental health, safeguarding or reputational, legal or financial risks) you will need to carry out a risk assessment, which you may be asked to provide as part of the ethics approval process. Your academic supervisor will be able to advise you on this.

You can book onto [Research Risk Assessment training](#) online, where there is also further information about risk assessment and managing health and safety risks.

If you are planning to carry out research abroad it is important that you research your destination, so that you are aware of [security, safety or culture issues](#) that may affect you or your research. The University has comprehensive travel insurance, which you will be able to arrange by completing the online [Travel Insurance Application Form](#).

School Safety

The University's Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy, sets out the health and safety responsibilities of all University employees according to their job role. The responsibilities of employees and managers are also summarised in the Employee Guide to the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy. Both documents can be found either on the safety notice board adjacent to the main entrance, from David Knight or via the [Life Sciences Intranet](#).

The School has produced specific guidance and, where appropriate, safety standards and codes of practice for a range of activities. Further information can be found on the [Life Sciences safety intranet site](#).

Safety glasses

There is a School rule (supported by legislation) requiring you to wear safety glasses in all laboratories. Some areas have a risk assessment which says that glasses need not be worn, for example, when using a microscope; these areas will be made known to you when you are in the lab.

SO PLEASE NOTE – the general rule is that you must wear safety glasses in the laboratory.

Academic integrity, academic offences and research misconduct

The University expects students to complete all assessment with honesty and integrity and to follow our [conventions for academic writing](#) (including appropriate referencing of sources) and ethical considerations. If you don't meet these expectations, then you may be charged with having committed an [academic offence](#) or [research misconduct](#), a matter the University takes very seriously.

It is your responsibility to make yourself aware of the regulations governing examinations and how to correctly prepare your work. An academic offence can take place even if you didn't mean to commit one, and examples include plagiarism, falsifying data or evidence, and communicating with another candidate in an examination.

Referencing

Respecting authorship through good academic practice is one of the key values of higher education in the UK. Referencing is how you acknowledge all sources used within a piece of work. You must reference all work used whether cited directly (quotes), or indirectly (paraphrasing and summarising).

Referencing allows you to give credit to other's ideas, work, research, theories, concepts, outcomes and results, and demonstrates your breadth of reading and knowledge on a subject. If you do not reference properly, this could amount to [plagiarism](#), which is an [academic offence](#).

There are styles of referencing which will determine exactly how you format your reference. Your departmental referencing style is Harvard. You must use this referencing style. Guidance on your referencing style is available [online](#), including an [interactive referencing tutorial](#). You can also take the [Academic Integrity course on Moodle](#).

Academic Skills Support

There are a variety of skills and training opportunities available for postgraduate research students from [Skills for Success](#), covering a range of aspects across the research and thesis writing process. We also run a dedicated English language support class for international PhD students, a thesis writing class for all students and a PhD Support Network.

We are committed to ensuring that every student is able to get the most out of their postgraduate research, and are here to help all year round, providing support, resources, [workshops](#) and [1:1s](#) on:

- [Academic writing](#)
- [Maths and stats](#)
- [Digital Skills](#)
- [Research](#) and [referencing](#)
- [English language](#)

Some of these services are open to all students at the university, whilst others are specially tailored to research students. All are designed to help you develop your academic and language skills no matter what department or school you are attached to, or what stage you are at.

All services are free and have no limits on the number of bookings you can make.

Departmental/school support

Laboratory Notebook

All PGR students receive one complimentary laboratory notebook per academic year. The laboratory notebook facilitates the keeping of a valid record of your research work. Accurate records will allow you to prove when a particular idea was generated. It will

also allow you to register details of each experiment and when they were done. This Notebook belongs to the student/researcher and the supervisor or head of laboratory. The School requires that you adhere to a set of guidelines in completion of the Notebook and these will be circulated via email.

All students are given a laboratory notebook on arrival, however, new notebooks for subsequent years can be obtained from Marcus Buchanan in the admin office (3.SW.4.00) or from Liz Lee Reynolds (3.SW.4.01)

All PGR students have a supervisor or supervisors. Your most important academic contact in the School is your supervisor. Your supervisors will guide you in your studies including your training in the laboratory. Students meet with their supervisors on a regular basis. The frequency of meeting will vary with different projects and also at different stages of your studies but is likely to be weekly or fortnightly. Meetings and discussions with supervisors should be recorded in your laboratory notebook. Consultation with your supervisors is particularly important when you are writing up your thesis. The supervisors should see all chapters with time to make comments and suggest revisions before your deadline for submission.

A full description of the responsibilities of supervisor and student are described in the accompanying document "Responsibilities of Supervisor and Student" and in the [Code of Conduct](#). As research students you are entitled to six weeks annual leave which must be agreed with your supervisor and the Graduate Office. As detailed in the code of practice any research time conducted outside the UK must be approved by the Head of School. A form must be completed which can be obtained from the Graduate Office.

Ordering and Stores

You can obtain items (e.g. stationery, pipettes etc.) from the Stores on the second floor (Room 2.07). The purchase of other materials and equipment using School order forms should be made in consultation with your supervisor or the technician in charge of your laboratory. [Up-to-date opening hours and information](#).

Use of equipment

Many items of equipment are heavily used and their use must be reserved in advance on an appropriate booking sheet. Only people whose names have been approved in

33 writing may use the autoclaves. Please inform your supervisor of any faulty equipment by email.

Repairs

If you find any equipment that is broken or not functioning properly you should complete a repair form on the Intranet. Failing this you should notify the technician in charge of your laboratory. You should never try to repair equipment yourself.

Late working

The normal working hours of the School are 8.00 am until 6.00pm, Monday to Friday. Those working in the School outside working hours must be on the late working list. Researchers working after 10.00pm and before 7.00am must obtain written permission from their supervisors and notify the David Knight, Technical Services Manager, in advance. Such permission may only be given for periods of 7 days.

You will only be included in the late working list when you have been fully trained in the laboratory. Please email Marcus Buchanan (lsqgr@essex.ac.uk) to obtain the late working list application form. A passport size photograph should be attached to the Late Working Pass Application. There is a photo machine outside Students Union Bar. You will also be given a copy of Late Working Pass Procedures which must be followed. David Knight, the Technical Services Manager in room 4.02, will update your SALTO door access to the building.

Proofreading services

Before considering the use of proofreading services, all students should first discuss their work with their supervisor(s). Many students seek 'proofreading' services at some point during their studies, but different types of editing can occur under this name which may not be appropriate in an academic context where work is assessed and could potentially qualify as an [academic offence](#). The University is keen to ensure as far as possible that students understand what [proofreading work should entail](#) and the acceptable boundaries to which any proofreading or editing must adhere to.

All students should ensure that any agreement entered into with a proofreader conforms to the [University's policy and guidance on proofreading](#).

Language classes

Academic English Support

Skills for Success run a dedicated [PhD Language Support](#) module throughout the year, to help you develop your writing skills, presentation skills and confidence. They also run a range of [Academic English Support classes](#) which are available throughout the year. Modules include Academic Writing, Speaking, Reading and Grammar Review. Bookable [workshops](#) and [1:1 support](#) are also available.

General English classes for beginner/intermediate/advanced learners (GEC)

The [Department of Language and Linguistics](#) offers the wider University of Essex community the chance to improve their English language skills through our [General English Classes](#). These classes are available to:

- Dependants and close family members of students and staff at the University of Essex
- International staff at Essex who may want to work on their general English and fluency skills
- International students currently studying at UEIC Kaplan
- International students currently studying at both UG and PG level at Essex who wish to develop their language skills

The classes, which take place at the Colchester Campus, will enable you to meet people from other countries and cultures and will help you develop your language skills. These classes are free and are taught at three basic levels: Beginner (A1/A2), Intermediate (B1/B2) and Advanced (C1/C2) and will focus on listening, speaking, reading and writing. Throughout the course, you will have a unique opportunity to develop your conversation skills, by reflecting on real-life examples of how language is used in context.

Learning a language

Learn a language at Essex to increase your global and cultural awareness. Language learning can give you the confidence to work and travel internationally, expand your options for studying abroad, and get a competitive edge when you're looking for a job. There are a number of ways to do it, so [look online](#) to discover the best option for you.

Extenuating Circumstances

[Extenuating circumstances](#) are circumstances beyond your control which cause you to perform less well during your studies than you might have expected or to miss an assessment or milestone. In general, valid extenuating circumstances will be of a medical or personal nature that affect you for any significant period of time and/or during assessment.

Your department or school will review your claim at your Supervisory Panel and RSPB and determine an appropriate course of action to take into account your extenuating circumstances, if appropriate.

If you do need to make an extenuating circumstances claim, you should first read the guidance very carefully and seek advice from [SU Advice](#) or the [Student Services Hub](#). Please be prepared that you may need to include supporting evidence with your claim. Extenuating circumstance claims must be submitted to your Graduate Administrator in your department/school by no later than two weeks before the meeting of the Supervisory Panel, or by the deadline published by the department/school if different. It cannot be guaranteed that forms submitted after this date will be referred to the Panel/RSPB. You should also ensure that you record at least a brief summary of your extenuating circumstances on your Supervisory Panel report form.

Submission of Thesis

Thesis Submission Pre-Examination

All candidates for a Masters by Dissertation (MSD), Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) and Professional Doctorate must submit an electronic copy of their thesis for examination.

The electronic copy should take the format of one PDF document containing all chapters, references and appendices.

All registration fees and debts must be paid before the thesis can be accepted for submission.

You should submit the following as attachments via email to: pgrsubmission@essex.ac.uk:

- a) A single PDF copy of your entire thesis; and
- b) A submission form (RD1) completed and signed by yourself.

Thesis Submission for Award

Following the completion of the examination process, the candidate will be notified via email that in order to gain their award they must submit one electronic version of their thesis to the online [Research Repository](#). Following the receipt of this deposit, the candidate will be awarded their postgraduate research degree.

Thesis Deposit and Retention

Your thesis will be made open access when deposited in the online Research Repository. Students wishing to [place a restriction or embargo](#) on their thesis must do so via the [Approval of Title \(intention to submit\) form](#) prior to the submission of their thesis for examination.

When depositing your thesis in the [online Repository](#) you will be required to read and accept the conditions stipulated in the Thesis Deposit Agreement. The Thesis Deposit Agreement outlines the availability of the thesis and how it will be stored in the Repository.

Examiners and the Viva

Your supervisor will not normally be present during **your viva** and will not normally have any contact with your examiners other than to arrange their appointment. [More information on the examination process](#) and viva can be found on the Student Directory.

Exit Awards (Professional Doctorate students only)

If a student does not meet the progression requirements on the Professional Doctorate, or the examiners feel that the thesis has not met the requirements for the Professional Doctorate, they may be eligible to receive an exit award or lower award, as appropriate for the course. Details of the available exit/lower awards can be found in the [Code of Practice: Professional Doctorates](#).

Appeals

PGR students wishing to [appeal](#) against either a progress decision (a recommendation made by the Research Students' Progress Board (RSPB)) or an examination decision (an outcome decided upon by the examiners following a viva voce) should follow the [Appeals Procedure](#).

Please note that research students on the first year of an Integrated PhD (a 4-year programme) or a research student on a Professional Doctorate programme who wish to appeal against a progress decision of the RSPB (e.g. being downgraded or discontinued) should do so in accordance with the above procedure. However, students who wish to appeal against the decision of the Board of Examiners' consideration/decision of their taught marks should appeal in accordance with the Academic Appeals [Procedures for Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught Programmes of Study](#).

Students thinking about making an appeal are strongly advised to contact the [SU Advice Centre](#).

Student Voice

At the University of Essex, the views, ideas and feedback of our students are at the heart of what the University does. The time students take to offer feedback is hugely appreciated and this feedback, both positive and developmental, is used to help make short and longer-term improvements, both to the experience of current students, but also for Essex students of the future. You can do this in a number of ways at Essex through your [Student Voice](#).

Student Representatives

You can [contact or volunteer](#) to be a [Student Representative](#) who represent the voice of fellow students in departmental Student Voice Groups (SVG) and other University level committees.

Student Voice Groups

[Student Voice Groups](#) (SVGs) are made up of [Student Representatives](#) and members of staff. SVGs typically meet once per term and provide an accessible arena for students to discuss with staff issues connected to teaching, learning and student support. They also provide an opportunity for the department or school to consult with students and receive feedback on new proposals. Such proposals are recorded in SVG logs, where specific details are requested in order to facilitate the feedback.

Student Surveys

[Student satisfaction surveys](#) enable the University to gauge overall satisfaction amongst students. When the results have been reviewed and analysed, the University can then enhance your experience of learning at Essex by closing the feedback loop.

The University runs a PGR Student Voice Survey bi-annually, and this will be running this year . If eligible, you will be invited to participate via email.

If you have some feedback but don't know who to tell, email: studentvoice@essex.ac.uk

Your department or school will also welcome your feedback. They will have a range of quick feedback mechanism for you to use. Contact your departmental office if you are not sure what these are.

You Matter

We know university life can throw up all kinds of concerns and questions. Everyone has [mental health](#) – sometimes your mental health may be good, other times it may be not so good. It could be stress related to deadlines, general worries or concerns about friends and family members. Whatever is worrying you, if you need some information, advice or support, the University offer a wide range of services and support to help you.

Student Services Hub

If you need practical advice, a confidential conversation, or general information and guidance on University life, no matter what the issue is, the [Student Services Hub](#) is the place to go. You can find out about health and wellbeing, accommodation, careers services, money matters and much more. Your questions matter and you'll get answers from our team of experts.

To contact the Student Services Hub please use this link to access our web pages and talk to us on Live Chat: [Ask the Hub](#)

Support for disabilities and additional needs

We encourage all new students with a disability, long term medical condition, specific learning difference or mental health condition to disclose and register with the [Student Wellbeing and Inclusivity Service \(SWIS\)](#) so that we can plan how best to [support you in your studies](#).

If you are [care experienced, estranged from your family, primary carer and/or University of Sanctuary](#) student please contact the Student Wellbeing and Inclusivity Service (SWIS) for further information about support that may be available to you. You may also be eligible for one of our [bursaries](#) that is available to provide additional funding.

The University of Essex is committed to providing an inclusive educational learning environment for all students. The [Student Reasonable Adjustment Policy](#) provides a framework for the effective implementation of a reasonable adjustment and to ensure the legal requirements of the [Equality Act 2010](#) are met.

UK students may be eligible for a [Disabled Students' Allowance grant](#). If you are not a UK student and you have a disability, you may be eligible for [other grants and funding](#). We would recommend that you [contact the Student Services Hub](#) to discuss all the options that may be available to you, as well as for general advice, support and information on health and wellbeing issues.

Support for students who are pregnant

If you are pregnant, you are protected under the [Equality Act 2010](#) and are encouraged to contact your department/school or SWIS via the [Student Services Hub](#). They can talk through a variety of issues including; arrangements for maternity-related absence, financial implications, visa implications and emotional support.

Support for students who are parents or guardians

There is a wide range of information, support and advice available for parents and guardians studying with us available on the [Student Directory](#). Please contact the [Student Services Hub](#) or your department for further guidance or to discuss your individual circumstances.

Children or young people under 18 who are not registered students are not permitted to attend any University teaching events so it is important that you make adequate childcare arrangements to enable you to attend your teaching and assessments. If you have emergency childcare needs or other circumstances linked to caring responsibilities that affect your availability for teaching or assessment, we have support in place. It is important that you contact your department by [reporting your absence](#) as soon as possible to let them know you won't be there and to discuss your situation and any support they can offer. The University also has an [Extenuating Circumstances Policy](#) where absence relates to missed assessment.

Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEP)

If you have a permanent or temporary disability that may mean you have difficulty in evacuating one or more areas, you can arrange for a [Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan \(PEEP\)](#).

Essex Access Forum

The [Essex Access Forum](#) is a university-wide discussion and advocacy forum and consultation body working to support excellence in all aspects of physical and non-physical access at Essex (student education, staff employment and visitor experience). Membership is open to both staff and students, with and without disabilities.

Seeing a Doctor

If you're studying on a course for more than six months, you're required to register with a local doctor. Our Colchester Campus has its own [health centre](#) or you can use the [NHS Choices postcode](#) finder to find your nearest doctor. If you require emergency medical or mental health services, there are a [number of options available](#) both through the NHS and also the University, regardless which campus you are studying at.

Counselling service

The University's counselling service is available to all registered students, including those who are intermitting on medical grounds. To learn more about the counselling service, visit the [counselling page](#) of the University website. You can also request counselling directly by completing this [form](#).

Digital wellbeing support

SilverCloud offers a broad range of programmes to support students with their wellbeing, mental health and long-term conditions. Use your Essex email to sign into a programme of your choice. Visit the [SilverCloud](#) platform.

Togetherall is a digital, peer support, mental health platform where you can share your lived experiences and learn from the experiences of others in a safe and anonymised global community. Use your Essex email to [register on the platform](#).

Student Wellbeing Support Line

Open 24-hours a day, including at weekends and bank holidays. Ring 0800 028 3766 for emotional support at any time.

Wellbeing appointments for students at Colchester, Southend and Loughton

Our team of Wellbeing Assessors offer a welcoming and friendly space where you will be able to talk about anything that is happening in your life.

We can help guide you to develop the personal resources and skills you need to navigate the challenges and opportunities of student life.

Our support is designed to be short term and intended to guide you on your next steps. If you need longer term support we can help to signpost you to external health/wellbeing services and partnerships.

You can make an appointment by emailing wellbeing@essex.ac.uk.

We offer in person appointments, or online via Zoom, or via telephone (01206873133).

Study and Wellbeing Intervention Policy and Procedure

[The Study and Wellbeing Intervention Policy and Procedure](#) provides a framework to support students during their studies when it appears that their health and wellbeing is either disrupting or having a detrimental impact on themselves or on people around them. The policy applies to all students and will aim to ensure students are offered appropriate intervention and support to succeed academically.

UK immigration advice and guidance

[Immigration advice and guidance](#) is regulated in the UK by the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC) and can only be given by those that are authorised and competent to do so. We publish lots of information and guidance on our website for students and you can contact one of our authorised advice services via the '[ask us a question](#)' section for further advice about the UK's student Immigration Rules.

Money management

Financial Support Officers in our [Student Services Hub](#) and our independent [Students' Union Advice](#) can provide [money management and budgeting advice](#) and can talk through any financial issues that you may be experiencing and how best to tackle them. You can also ensure that you keep your finances on track by working through some free online money management modules offered by [Blackbullion](#).

If you get into financial difficulty, you should get help and talk to someone **as soon as possible**. The sooner your problem is identified, the sooner it can be solved. You may be eligible to [apply for financial support](#) to assist you with short-term unexpected and unforeseen costs while studying at Essex.

Funding opportunities

There are lots of funding opportunities available to UK, EU and International students offered by the University and by external companies and organisations. This may be in the form of a student loan, a scholarship or a studentship. You can find out more information, including what you may be eligible for on the [PGR Scholarships and Funding webpage](#) or your [department/school page](#).

Students' Union Advice

Our [SU Advice](#) service also offers free, confidential, independent and impartial advice on many issues that might be affecting you. Our friendly, trained staff are on hand to support you throughout your time at Essex. You can speak to us about Academic processes and procedures, representation at University meetings, Student/Tier 4 visa extensions, housing, complaints, welfare and consumer issues.

Colchester students – suadvice@essex.ac.uk; 01206 874034

Southend students – suacsou@essex.ac.uk; 01702 328235 (term time only)

Loughton students – suaclo@essex.ac.uk; 01206 874034

We also have our very own letting agency [SU Homes](#) designed to offer help and support for students to find off campus accommodation.

Residence Life

Our [Residence Life team](#) is here to help you settle in and support you during your time living on campus. Residents' Assistants are student staff who organise social and

community events to help you make friends and adjust to university life. You can find out about all our exciting events by following us on [Facebook](#) or by checking out the University [Events page](#).

Religion, faith and beliefs

We're proud of our vibrant and diverse [multicultural community](#) and welcome everyone, of all faiths and none. The calm, friendly and supportive atmosphere in our Faith Centre is a welcoming place for staff, students and the wider community to meet, interact and engage with each other.

Harassment support

We are Essex. We pride ourselves on being a [welcoming and inclusive student community](#). We offer a wide [range of support](#) to individuals and groups of student members who may have specific requirements, interests or responsibilities – to help you fulfil your potential.

We encourage a culture of dignity and respect. We're committed to upholding an environment that's free from any form of harassment or bullying. Though rare, these incidents can occur and if they do our [Report and Support Service](#) is on hand to help.

Health and safety on campus

Our campuses are generally very [safe environments](#). We want to ensure that things stay this way. In order to achieve this, we work closely with local agencies including the police and borough councils. Take a look at our website for [general information and advice](#).

Please familiarise yourself with [fire safety and emergency evacuation procedures](#) for your accommodation, work or study location. If you have a permanent or temporary disability that may mean you have difficulty in evacuating one or more areas, you can arrange for a [Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan \(PEEP\)](#).

Please take note of our [advice on the safe use of electrical items and prohibited electrical items](#) in residential and non-residential areas.

All students residing on campus **must** complete the Moodle [Fire Safety Course for Residents training](#).

If you have any health and safety concerns or need to report an incident, please use the [University's reporting service](#) to notify us.

Making a complaint

The University is a large community engaged in many activities of both an academic and non-academic nature. From time to time, you may feel dissatisfied with some aspect of your dealings with the University and, when that happens, it is important that the issue is dealt with constructively and as quickly as possible without risk of disadvantage or recrimination.

The University aims to resolve complaints quickly and informally in accordance with the [Student concerns and complaints procedure](#) which can be found on our website.

Your information

Changes to your information

During your period of study at Essex, you may wish to be known by a preferred name or update your legal name on our student record database (ESIS) if your circumstances change. It is important you keep your information up to date, including any change to your address or contact information, which you can [manage and update online](#). If you have immigration permission to study with us and obtain a new passport or visa during your studies, please ensure you bring this to your [Student Services Hub](#) so a scan can be taken for University record.

Your personal information

We collect and hold lots of information about you, your course, and your progress so that we know who you are, what you're doing, and how you are getting on. This means we can support you and also improve our services to reflect the need of our students.

All information about you is kept securely, and access to your information is only given to staff who need it in order to do their job. You have a [right to ask for copies of information](#) we hold about you.

To find out more about what information we collect, what we do with it, who gets to see it, and your rights under the Data Protection Act 2018, read our [Privacy Notice for students](#).

Student Development

Careers Services

The [Career Services](#) team offer a programme of information, advice, guidance and support through events, workshops and one-to-one sessions. With teams dedicated to supporting work-based learning, placements, internships and professional development, we'll provide the information and support you need to thrive.

CareerHub

Book on to careers events and workshops, take career assessments, practice your interview skills, build your CV, and connect with employers on [CareerHub](#), the online Essex careers and jobs portal. You will find hundreds of live opportunities from part-time jobs, internships and placements to graduate vacancies on the jobs board. You can login to [CareerHub](#) with your Essex username and password.

Get experience

Develop your skills and showcase your potential through our extracurricular offer:

- Find the right activity for you with **Chart My Path**, and to get recognised on your HEAR for your extracurricular achievements with the **Big Essex Award**. Log into [GradIntelligence](#) to get started.
- Explore Essex Interns to access paid internships with University departments or schools and local businesses that have been exclusively designed for Essex Students. Log into [GradIntelligence](#) to get started.
- Apply for [Career Mentoring](#) and be matched with an industry expert to expand your network, learn from their experience and explore options for your future.
- Calling our Black students! Unlock your academic potential and cultivate research skills through our digital **Black Researchers' Hub**. Explore on [GradIntelligence](#) today.

Volunteering

Join the [vTeam](#) and be the difference. There are plenty of opportunities to volunteer during your time at Essex. The [vTeam](#), run by the Students Union, is a fantastic

opportunity to meet new people, make friends, give something to the local community, and gain valuable skills.

You Are Essex

Your Award Certificate

Award Certificates are issued upon final completion of an award. Upon conferral of your final award, your Award Certificate will be available on your [GradIntelligence](#) account within 7 days. In addition to your digital Award Certificate, you will also receive a physical embossed and crested Award Certificate either at Graduation or posted to you. You will be contacted by the Graduation and Awards team regarding issue of your printed Award Certificate.

If you undertook taught elements as part of your studies and require a transcript, you can request this by contacting the Graduation and Awards team at award-docs@essex.ac.uk.

Graduation ceremonies

The culmination of all your hard work! [Graduation](#) ceremonies take place at our Colchester Campus in the Ivor Crewe Lecture Hall with a departmental Reception held afterwards in the Sports Arena. All eligible students will be invited to attend a ceremony at the next available Graduation. Confirmed dates for future graduation ceremonies are [published online](#). It is essential that all students book their place at Graduation by the deadline provided.

The Graduation and Awards team will contact eligible students directly with more information, including eligibility and how and when to book their place at Graduation.

References

Requesting references from members of staff

If you require a personal reference, always ask permission from a member of staff before giving their name as a referee. You should consider from whom it is most appropriate to request a reference and who will be best equipped to evidence your character and performance in the subject.

It is always helpful if you can provide the member of staff with details about the course or job you have applied for and, if relevant, a CV or other summary of your

qualifications and experience. Please try to ask for references in good time – it is not always possible for a member of staff to write a reference immediately.

Copies of references

A copy of any reference provided will be retained within our department for no longer than three years for taught students.

Alumni

Essex is forever and although your time here will fly by, you'll be part of the Essex family for life. When you graduate, you'll get an alumni card and join a community of over 125,000 fellow graduates around the world. We'd love to keep in touch and invite you to our alumni events, networking and volunteering opportunities, as well as offer you special alumni benefits. Want to know more? Visit [our website](#).

We will be here for you wherever life takes you next. You might know the path you wish to take, but if you need help to reach your goals, our Careers Services Team offer information, guidance and advice on your different options after graduation. Careers support is for life as an Essex graduate and we'll be with you every step of the way.

We are proud of our world-class research at Essex and your invitation to contribute is lifelong. Whatever you choose to do, please stay in touch. We'd love to hear where your Essex degree has taken you.